

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Rep. Ed Pastor, D-Ariz., today voted for passage of H.R. 2, the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007. This bill amends the Fair Labor Standards Act to provide for an increase in the federal minimum wage to \$7.25 per hour from \$5.15 per hour over two years. The bill passed the House with a 315-115 vote and now moves to the Senate.

"This increase to the minimum wage is long overdue," Pastor said. "I'm glad that we will finally be able to provide a more decent wage to our working people."

The federal minimum wage was last increased in 1997. Since then, inflation has greatly undercut its buying power, Pastor said. This new increase raises the annual earnings of the average full-time worker earning the minimum wage by \$1,520 per year-enough to cover seven months of transportation, nine months of groceries, or eleven months of heating and utilities for an average low-income family.

The Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007 will benefit the people that need it the most, Pastor added. According to data collected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employees who earned below \$7.25 per hour in 2005 were more likely to have been women, minorities, and lacked a high school diploma. According to these statistics, minimum wage earners were more likely to be on welfare and without health insurance. In 2002, minimum-wage earners earned an average of 68 percent of their total family income.